

Nadler, Baldwin, Frank and Polis Introduce Resolution Recognizing the 40th Anniversary of Stonewall

Wednesday, 13 May 2009

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Representatives Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Barney Frank (D-MA) and Jared Polis (D-CO) introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives to recognize the 40th anniversary of Stonewall. Stonewall is an essential piece of American history that catalyzed the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) movement for equal rights. On June 28, 1969, during a climate of fear and terror against the LGBT community in New York and nationally, the New York Police Department conducted a raid of the Stonewall Inn, a bar in New York’s Greenwich Village frequented by the LGBT community. Bruised, shocked, angry and fed up, patrons of the bar organized spontaneous demonstrations outside the bar and onto the streets of New York City. Protests continued during the next few days. This watershed moment is the symbolic genesis of the gay rights movement in the U.S.

“The events at Stonewall 40 years ago had a profound effect on how LGBT Americans came to see their struggle for equality,” said Nadler. “Stonewall catalyzed gay Americans – and those who support their rights – into putting gay rights on the forefront, out in the open, unafraid and unapologetic. We have come very far in the battle for LGBT rights and acceptance since Stonewall, but we still have a ways to go. Together, we will keep fighting.”

“Stonewall was a moment in time that sparked a movement,” said Baldwin. “We honor all those who stood their ground at Stonewall as we carry on their quest for full and equal rights for all Americans.”

“As we move ahead in the movement for legal equality, it is important to remember those who had the courage to fight hard when things were much tougher,” said Frank.

“With President Obama, the Democratic Congress, and the nation at our side, we are facing an incredible, historic opportunity for change for the LGBT community,” said Polis. “But we cannot go forward without being mindful of where we’ve been. Stonewall brought the gay rights movement to the forefront of American culture and gave rise to the vibrant and politically active LGBT community that we have today. Our job now is to pick up where they left off and to provide equal rights for all Americans.”

The following is the text of the Resolution:

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the 40th anniversary of Stonewall.

Whereas the Stonewall Inn opened on or about March 18, 1967, at 51-53 Christopher Street in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City, New York;

Whereas the Stonewall Inn was a bar primarily patronized by a diverse cross-section of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community and it became a very popular institution;

Whereas at around 1:20 AM on June 28, 1969, police raided the Stonewall Inn, closing the bar and forcing patrons outside;

Whereas such raids were among the many ways in which government harassed and discriminated against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community during this period, which included, for example, prohibiting dancing with a person of the same sex or wearing clothing more typical for another gender, terminating one's employment, and using entrapment to arrest people;

Whereas early on the morning of June 28, 1969, after the raid, years of frustration and anger among members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community at being harassed and unfairly targeted by government boiled over into a conflict with police;

Whereas thousands returned to the Stonewall Inn on the night of June 28, 1969, to express their support of basic freedoms, equality, and fair treatment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans, chanting such slogans as "Gay Power", "We Want Freedom Now", and "Equality For Homosexuals";

Whereas protests occurred again around the Stonewall Inn on the night of July 2, 1969;

Whereas the series of protests at the Stonewall Inn, often referred to as "Stonewall", marked a watershed event in which lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans dramatically showed a growing determination to publicly resist government discrimination and harassment;

Whereas Stonewall sparked a remarkable increase in activism and action by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans across the country to advocate for equal rights;

Whereas on June 28, 1970, thousands of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans took part in the Christopher Street Liberation Day march from Greenwich Village to Central Park to mark the first anniversary of Stonewall;

Whereas people in Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco also marched or gathered on June 27-28, 1970, to remember the first anniversary of Stonewall;

Whereas in 1989, the section of Christopher Street in front of the Stonewall Inn was renamed "Stonewall Place";

Whereas in 1999, the building at 51-53 Christopher Street that used to be the Stonewall Inn, Christopher Park, and the immediately surrounding area were listed on the National Register of

Historic Places;

Whereas in 2000, the building at 51-53 Christopher Street that used to be the Stonewall Inn, Christopher Park, and the immediately surrounding area were listed as a National Historic Landmark;

Whereas inspired by Stonewall, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender pride parades and festivals occur in cities across the country and the world every June;

Whereas in recognition of Stonewall, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month is celebrated every June; and

Whereas a great deal of progress has been made in achieving equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans since Stonewall occurred 40 years ago, but much work remains to be done: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives –

(1) recognizes the 40th anniversary of Stonewall;

(2) honors those who participated during Stonewall and since that time in the civil rights struggle of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans; and

(3) recommits itself to protecting and providing equal rights for all Americans, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.